



# SENATOR RUNNER'S WEEK IN REVIEW

A WEEKLY REVIEW THAT WILL KEEP YOU INFORMED AND UP-TO-DATE



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## Increasing Affordability and Access: Key to California's Health Care Solution

The key to California's health care solution is to increase access and affordability. I am open to many reasonable solutions on how to solve these problems but believe that we must not embrace systems that either have failed or been rejected by California voters.

First, as we discuss solutions to improve our health care system, we need to know which segment of the uninsured population actually has access to health care coverage and which does not.

Of the estimated six million Californians who are said to be uninsured, less than half actually do not have access to health care coverage. Many Californians are eligible for Medi-Cal or Healthy Families but do not participate while other Californians are offered health insurance by their employer and turn it down. These individuals clearly have health care coverage access. And of course there are millions of illegal immigrants who are also counted as uninsured.

So when we break down the numbers of the uninsured we see the number considerably shrinks with respect to who has access to health care coverage. I believe that we need to work with real facts and the facts are that most Californians do have access to health care coverage. However, I do believe we need to improve the affordability of our health care system.

Last week, Speaker Nunez penned an editorial in *Capitol Weekly* which emphasized that Democrats have offered different health care "solutions". First, he touted the proposal for a government-mandated health care system. This system has failed in many other countries. Even the Supreme Court in Canada ruled its system unconstitutional because people could not access health care -- they waited and sometimes died in line. The court ruled, "The prohibition on obtaining private health insurance is not constitutional where the public system fails to deliver reasonable services." Clearly, such a system would be a huge step backward for California.

Then, the Speaker suggested that an employer-mandated health care system is a "solution" for California. The voters have already spoken about such a system. After the Legislature passed an employer-mandated system in 2004, the voters placed a referendum on the ballot and rejected this "solution". I do not believe we should ignore the voters' will. The voters clearly understood that

### News of the Week

[Bay Area Judge Halts CA Death Penalty,  
Calls it Unconstitutional](#)

[Judge to Hear LAUSD Reform Case](#)

[Blood Alley Project Pushed](#)

[Governor's Redistricting Plan Is A Start](#)

[Weintraub Column: In San Diego, A Sneak Peak  
at a Fiscal Horror Show](#)

[New Bond Measures May Not Be Needed Yet](#)

[Walters Column: Workers Comp Clash Will Resume](#)

[State Ordered to Ease Prison Overcrowding](#)

such a system would result in lost jobs and businesses relocating from California. This “solution” is nothing but a job killer.

But where I think we can agree is that health care costs are too high and we need to increase affordability for every Californian. The Speaker does a good job pointing out that health care costs have been increasing at 2.5 times the rate of inflation. We must improve affordability.

I believe that it is important for the Legislature to allow for more options and choices for Californians. For years, the majority party has blocked Californians from having choices in health care. They prefer to dictate only certain prescriptions instead of allowing Californians to decide what is best for themselves and their families. We cannot tolerate such heavy-handed mandates that unreasonably limit consumer choices and drive up the cost of health coverage.

Californians demand choice. As we have seen whenever a market is opened up and allowed to have more choices and competition, costs will drop. Isn't this the exact point that was made with the Speaker's telecommunications bill last year? More competition will lead to better and more affordable choices for Californians.

It is important that we also increase transparency and accountability. Arming Californians with information about costs, they will be better equipped to make decisions for themselves and their families. With more transparency and more options, it will further increase competition resulting in more affordability. Why do you think corrective laser eye surgery has become so much more affordable? Because Californians are allowed to shop around and make decisions on quality and price.

We must actively identify processes that are unnecessary and wasteful. We need to streamline health care to maximize efficiency. It is also essential to encourage and increase the use of technology. Health care technology will help increase quality patient care, reduce medical errors, and will decrease the cost of health care. We must consider financially incentivizing hospitals and physicians to invest in and use more health care technology.

As we discuss the best proposals to increase affordability and access, I believe that we must be open-minded and consider out-of-the-box ideas.

However, it is counterproductive to retread old proposals that have either failed in other countries or have been rejected by California voters. Instead, let's work together to improve our health care system based on real facts in order to make our health care system more efficient and create more affordable choices for Californians and their families.

The road to increasing health care access is to equip Californians with the power of choice, and the power of knowledge, and then we can start down the road to improve our health care system.

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